

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

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FM AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7093

INFO AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN

AMEMBASSY KINGSTON

AMEMBASSY NASSAU

AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN

COMCARIBSEAFRON

CINCLANT

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE BRIDGETOWN 0748

E.O. 11652: DECONTROL FOLLOWING MAY 1, 1975

TAGS: PFOR AC XL CARICOM

SUBJ: HALSTEAD COMMITTEE RECOMMENDS ANTIGUA'S MEMBERSHIP
IN CARICOM

REFS: BRIDGETOWN 682, A-023 (ITEM 4)

CINCLANT FOR POLAD

1. REPORT PREPARED BY FIVE-MAN COMMITTEE HEADED BY FORMER HOME AFFAIRS MINISTER DONALD HALSTEAD (BRIDGETOWN A-23) IS BELIEVED TO HAVE RECOMMENDED THAT ANTIGUA BECOME PARTY TO CARICOM TREATY. ACCORDING TO GOA PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICER, REPORT HAS BEEN SUBMITTED TO PREMIER GEORGE WALTER AND WILL BE CONSIDERED BY CABINET. COMMITTEE WAS APPOINTED IN MARCH TO OUTLINE PROS AND CONS OF ANTIGUA'S PARTICIPATION IN CARICOM AND TO SOLICIT PUBLIC VIEWS.

2. IN RECENT CONVERSATION WITH EMBASSY POLOFF, FINANCE
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MINISTER SIDNEY PRINCE, SAID HE HAD BEEN AMONG THOSE WHO

HAD INITIATED CALL FOR REVIEW OF ANTIGUA'S EARLIER REFUSAL TO JOIN CARICOM. PRINCE SAID IT HAD BEEN HOPED THAT HALSTEAD REPORT WOULD BE COMPLETED IN TIME TO PERMIT GOA TO EXPRESS ITS VIEWS ON CARICOM MEMBERSHIP PRIOR TO SIGNING OF TREATY BY LDC'S IN ST LUCIA APRIL 17. PRINCE EXPRESSED PERSONAL VIEW THAT ANTIGUA SHOULD JOIN CARICOM DESPITE FACT THAT CARICOM'S PREDECESSOR CARIFTA HAD PROVEN OF LITTLE BENEFIT TO ANTIGUA AND OTHER LDC'S. PRINCE SAID GOA, AND PREMIER WALTER IN PARTICULAR, HELD THREE PRIMARY RESERVATIONS ABOUT MEMBERSHIP: THAT IT MIGHT (1) CIRCUMSCRIBE ANTIGUA'S FREEDOM IN AREA OF FOREIGN POLICY, (2) INTERFERE WITH GOA EFFORTS TO OFFER ATTRACTIVE TERMS TO POTENTIAL INVESTORS, AND (3) PERMIT UNFAIR COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE TO PRODUCTS FROM CARICOM MDC'S AND HAMPER DEVELOPMENT OF ANTIGUAN INDUSTRIES. PRINCE SAID GOA'S CONCERN OVER CARICOM'S LIMITING FREEDOM OF INDIVIDUAL STATES IN AREA OF FOREIGN POLICY APPEARED TO BE UNFOUNDED AND BASED ON MISINTERPRETATION OF TREATY. HE FURTHER NOTED THAT SINCE IMPLEMENTATION OF TREATY PROVISIONS WOULD BE GRADUAL AND PHASED, GOA WOULD HAVE AMPLE TIME TO CONSIDER EACH STEP BEFORE GIVING ITS ASSENT. MOREOVER, ANTIGUA WOULD BE IN BETTER POSITION TO ARGUE FOR MORE FAVORABLE TERMS AS MEMBER OF CARICOM RATHER THAN AS OUTSIDER.

3. PRINCE INDICATED THAT RESERVATIONS WITHIN CABINET WERE STRONGLY HELD AND WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO OVERCOME. HE WAS NEVERTHELESS HOPEFUL THAT ANTIGUA WOULD EVENTUALLY ACCEDE TO TREATY.

4. MEANWHILE, OPPOSITION ANTIGUA LABOR PARTY (ALP) HAS CRITICIZED HALSTEAD COMMITTEE'S ALLEGED FAILURE TO GIVE ADEQUATE CONSIDERATION TO PUBLIC VIEWS. OPPOSITION SENATOR JOHN ST LUCE, WHO WITH OTHER OPPOSITION MEMBERS HAS CHIDED GOA'S EARLIER REFUSAL TO JOIN CARICOM, AGAIN CRITICIZED GOA FOR NOT TAKING ISSUE TO PARLIAMENT OR TO GENERAL PUBLIC. ALP LEADER AND FORMER PREMIER, VERE BIRD, ST., HAS LONG BEEN REGARDED AS PROPONENT OF CARIBBEAN ECONOMIC INTEGRATION. DONOVAN

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